

A True Gem

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I like gemstones. When I was in college, I worked at a jewelry store in Birmingham, Alabama. I started off selling watches and also served as the engraver for the store. Eventually, I was promoted to sales in the diamond and gemstone section, but continued my duties as an engraver. I learned a lot about diamonds and other gems. I have found the information I learned to be a great help to me over the years.

One thing I learned is how to judge the quality of a gem. I can easily tell the difference between a good quality stone and one of lesser value. It is easy for me to tell an artificial or man-made gem from a natural stone.

A few years ago, I was deployed to South America. We pulled into port in Cartagena, Columbia, which is known for its great values in emeralds. Since emeralds are mined in Columbia, we were assured that we would be able to find high quality stones at reasonable prices.

After I had shopped around at various stores, I was becoming frustrated at the stones I found. Most were not high quality and I did not feel they were reasonably priced. By chance I happened into one jewelry store and was looking around. When the clerk asked to help me, I told her I was looking for some earrings for my wife and showed her the size gems I was looking for and then showed her the quality I was looking for. She said, "Oh! You want to see the GOOD stones!" She then escorted me into the office where the owner took the loose stones out of the safe and showed me what was available. When I left, I had two high quality stones and paid about a fourth of what I would have paid for comparable gems in the U.S.

One interesting gem is the pearl. Pearls are the only gems sold which are produced by animals rather than mined from the earth. Additionally, they are the only ones which are fit for mounting without any cutting or polishing. You simply take the pearl out of the oyster, clean it off with salty water, and it is ready to be set into a ring, earrings or other piece of jewelry.

Did you know that your relationship with God is like a pearl? Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is like a pearl of great price. When a collector finds it, he sells all that he owns in order to obtain it. There is nothing we can do to improve upon it. God has formed it and it is perfect the way it is. Anything we do to improve it will, in fact, ruin it. We can't truly duplicate it. It will just be a cheap imitation.

If you don't have a relationship with God, you can if you are willing to. It costs you nothing, but you must surrender everything. If you want it, call me. I can tell you how you can have it for yourself.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in Church on Sunday.

By the way, if you miss your copy of *The Emblem*, you can read the Chaplain's article on the Chapel Web Page of the Marine Corps Logistics Base website.